

## Alumni Profile: James Snyder '99, Hollywood Actor

From the time he was very young, James Snyder (Class of '99) funneled a large portion of his abundant energy into music. Piano, clarinet, guitar, harmonica, trumpet, voice—he enjoyed them all. In fact, he still receives a different musical instrument every Christmas from his family. So when he enrolled at Christian Brothers there was no doubt that he would also enroll in the music program. “From the very first liturgy that I attended,” James recalls, “I was impressed by the joy expressed by the students through their music, and I said to myself, I want to be part of that.” And part of that he was, for he ended up playing in both the concert and jazz bands and singing with the jazz choir. James attributes much of his growth as a musician during those years to the teachers who directed the program, in particular “Mr. Christian Bohm who, with his incredibly diverse talent, gave me something to aspire to.”

Although he discovered music very early on, it wasn't until his freshman year at Christian Brothers that James found a passion to equal his love of music—acting. It was in the spring of that year that he and several friends decided to audition for the musical *Godspell*. No one was more surprised than James when he was cast as Stephen, the Jesus character. As he states, “How can you top that role? At the time I did not realize the impact the words spoken by that character would ultimately have on me and my work as an actor.” After *Godspell*, James went on to perform in plays and the spring musicals, capping off his senior year with the role of Professor Harold Hill in *The Music Man*.

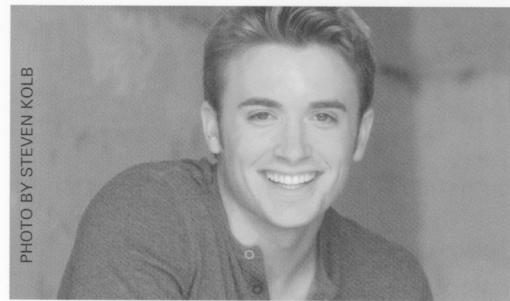
At some point during all those Christian Brothers performances, he doesn't remember the exact moment, James decided that he wanted to make his art his vocation, and so he applied to and was accepted into the Bachelor of Fine Arts program at the University of Southern California's School of Theatre. “The program at USC was a conservatory-type experience with a very small number of students,” James explains. “I received a lot of individual guidance which helped shape the art I wanted to create and the type of man I wanted to be. It also built my confidence, which really helps when you are sitting in front of a group of unsmiling producers at an audition.”

One of James' most memorable roles both during and after his college years was Luke Skywalker in *The Star Wars Trilogy in 30 Minutes*. “I have performed that role from Paris to Edinburgh, even in San Francisco for George Lucas and the heads of his companies. In April we performed the play 16 times in four days to an audience of 17 thousand fans at the *Star Wars* Convention in Indianapolis—those folks are very serious about their *Star Wars*!”

James' other professional credits include the role of Matt in last summer's Music Circus production of *The Fantasticks*, guest star spots on television shows such as *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody*, *The Gilmore Girls* and *Married to the Kellys*, and voice-overs for Disney DVD. In August, he wrapped up his first leading role in a major studio film, Dreamworks' *She's the Man*, starring Amanda Bynes, to be released in the spring of 2006. “It is based on Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, and my role is the Malvolio part, whose name in the movie is Malcolm,” states James. “It was a chance to play the comic bad guy, a type of character role that I had never done before.”



At CB, James with fellow cast members L to R: Ellen Walrath '99, Hansine Ingoglia '99, Amandy Cotta '98 and Valerie Smith '99



Publicity photo of actor James Snyder '99

As focused as James is on his acting career, it is the fact that he has other interests that makes him such a well-rounded performer, a lesson that he says he learned in high school. “Christian Brothers offered such a wide range of experiences for me: Lasallian Youth with Brother Kevin; student government with Ms. Powers and Mr. Shumann; soccer with coaches Vince, Javier and Eddie; Ven a ver with Mr. Capogreco '86 and Ms. Hoffart; building the Great Wall of China in Mr. English's class; those were great times with great mentors who taught me that there is a world out there far beyond the boundaries of Sacramento and, more importantly, the necessity of getting outside yourself to make that world a better place.” As a final note, James adds, “I feel extremely fortunate to have spent my high school years with friends who were accepting of each other regardless of their particular interests. The atmosphere at Christian Brothers engenders the kind of love and acceptance that lets you know that you are going to be supported no matter what.”